Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 13 Number 6 June 2016

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 19th June 2016: Narepally Reserve Forest. Meeting point: Opp. Mangatrai Pearls, Punjagutta, 6.00AM.

Narepally Reserve Forest is a 200 Hectare Eco- Park which has forest trails and a meditation zone too. Several species of birds, Spotted Deer, Wild Boar, Civet and Jungle Cats have been seen here. The trip promises to be an exciting one.

This will be a half-day trip. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms. Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

An Impromptu Trip to Umamaheshwaram, April 3, 2016

Text and photos: Humayun Taher

Yellow-throated Bulbul

It was all decided over phone and Whatsapp as is the trend! We started off at dawn for the little cliff-side temple of Uma Maheshwaram at the gates of the Srisailam Tiger Reserve,an interesting birding destination. Lawrence, Amritha, Srikanth and I looked forward to an interesting trip. As it turned out, we actually got a lot more excitement than we had bargained for.

Having found a very passable *chai* shop along the way to victual up, we came up to the once-huge reservoir of Dindi, and stopped momentarily to see if there was anything here. Finding the shrunken reservoir too horrible to contemplate, we hurriedly departed before melancholia overtook us at this shocking sight. And because of this, we were right on time when we finally pulled up at the parking lot of the old temple.

The little shop that stands just in front of the temple complex also supplies *chai*. So, having taken the opportunity to refresh ourselves with another cup of the steaming oolong and to strike up an acquaintance with half-a-dozen extremely obliging Emerald Doves (*Chalcophaps indica*), we proceed further up the trail, encountering along the way interesting sightings as a Black-headed Oriole (*Oriolus xanthornus*) the resident Tickell's Blue Flycatcher (*Cyornis tickelliae*) and my old friend, Percy the Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*). It seemed to have forgotten me... or maybe it was unhappy with me for not bringing its best friend P… along. Or it might have had something to do with the fact that it had brought its mate along! The hen led it further into the bushes and, with a somewhat unhappy cluck, it followed her into the canopy of the large trees shading the trail.

Emerald Dove

We then got busy trying to get a good sighting of the splendid Golden-fronted Leafbird (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) that was leaping about in the shrubbery, but it was rather shy and refused to appear out in the open.

We were somewhat compensated for this pusillanimity by the sighting of a splendid Rufous Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*) carrying on some sort of excavation inside half a coconut shell. I found myself fascinated by the strength of the bird, as it held down the shell in a position conducive to tearing at the insides, while still continuing to hold on to the thin branch it was perched on. Truly, birds are adept at turning most things to their advantage.

Rufous Treepie

At around this time, I took my morning constitutional to hitherto unknown levels by indulging in a solo flight attempt down the hillside. Having come out of this with a rather nasty cut on my shin, I decided to take things easy for a bit and so I sat myself down under the large *ficus* tree and scanned the branches.

As it happened, I couldn't have hit on a better plan because as soon as I had settled down, a small flycatcher flitted about in front of me. The few tantalizing glimpses I could get convinced me that it was something worth waiting for, but the bird was so active that it was not easy to focus on it. Finally however, the long awaited chance came when the bird, no doubt tired out with its exertions, decided to stop for a sip of water.

When it came down to the water trough, I saw it in all its glory – a bird I have long wanted to photograph, the little Black-naped Monarch (*Hypothymis azurea*). It is a very colourful bird and, unfortunately, a very active one. It would not sit still for more than a minute. Even the slaking of his thirst was completed in little more than a couple of seconds. Once, I thought I had captured the bird – it was sitting out in the open and allowed me to get the camera on it, and adjust the focus and then, just as I pressed the shutter button, it dived behind a leaf and all I got in the frame was a puff of blue!

Black-naped Monarch

So much for the joys of photography... but then, as I always keep reminding myself, if I can get a good sighting through my rather shop-soiled eyes, that is all that I need. A photograph is only a very pleasant bonus and not absolutely required really.

The cliff-side was getting hot and besides, one needs to change tactics to continue birding in the heat. Lawrence reminded us of a little well down the hill, where birding can be done merely by sitting down and pretending to be trees! He managed to convince us that we would never be happy until we had pretended to be trees on the edge of this ancient waterhole. So back to the car, yet another cup of vital bohea, and down the hill we went. We found the ancient well and almost immediately, discovered that there was more to this "pretending-to-be-a-tree" business than meets the eye. To begin with, it is necessary to first discover a genuine tree so that we could take advantage of the shade it offered.

The first to descend was a quartet of White-browed Bulbuls (*Pycnonotus luteolus*). These birds were present in large numbers. They seemed to be thirsty and indulged in a refreshing plunge in small puddles here and there. But this gang seemed to be a sort of social club and they tucked in right heartily, arranging themselves quite nicely on the rocky steps of the tank.

White-browed Bulbul

But the bulbuls were not the only visitors; a little Blue-throated Flycatcher (*Cyornis rubeculoides*) was also thirsty and spent a long time pottering about on the stone steps leading down to the well. Interestingly enough, it never stopped dancing the whole time, and I found it even more interesting to see that he was the only fellow in the area. He couldn't be courting because he was manifestly alone, but he persisted in dancing about the whole time... curious ideas some of these creatures have!

Blue-throated Flycatcher

The male Asian Paradise-flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) that now appeared had a lot more sense. It flew down and sipped from the surface, rested for a few seconds on the steps and then rapidly retreated into the cool of the shrubbery. He came back a few minutes later and the whole exercise was repeated again, and this second drink seemed to have supplied his wants because he now dived back into the shrubbery and did a neat vanishing act.

Asian Paradise-flycatcher

We were considerably disappointed at his pusillanimity but, before we could start complaining a little warbler came fluttering down just over our heads. We spent many minutes and a considerable amount of profanity trying to fix it in our binocs, while mopping the sweat off our faces. Just then, the bird decided to stop bouncing about, and we were finally able to get it in our optics and identify it as the Sykes's Warbler (*Iduna rama*). This is an interesting species, although not unknown to these hills. I think we have become used to brushing off most warblers as "Little Brown Jobs" and have not taken the trouble to look closely at them and try to identify them. There is a lot of grief involved in such an activity, but there are unexpected rewards as well.

Blue-faced Malkoha

The Blue-faced Malkoha (*Rhopodytes viridirostris*) that put in an appearance was very thirsty, but also very cautious. To start with, it didn't seem to like us at all, and even took the trouble of coming down almost into our laps to ascertain if we were friendly or not. We did nothing that could be construed by its astute intelligence as being unfriendly, and so it condescended to give us the benefit of the doubt. That done, it finally came down to the pool for its afternoon drink. It came somewhat mincingly, and with many false starts, but eventually got its mouthful of water. Its bashfulness disappeared and we had the pleasurable sight of this shy bird disporting itself out in the open, occasionally leaning forward and grabbing yet another mouthful of the life-giving fluid.

We saw no less than 35 species of birds by this little well, and out of a day-list of 88 species, that accounts for something like forty percent. I dislike such statistics, but I cannot help feeling that if the heat of this summer continues like it has been doing over the past few days, we shall soon be increasing these statistics to a far more startling seventy or even eighty percent.

Lesser Whitethroat

The day grew hotter and if we continued emulating trees, there was a strong possibility that we would soon wither away. We returned to the car and started homewards. A convenient *dhaba* by the wayside did us well in the matter of nutritious victuals and so, well-refreshed, and with a bag of around 88 species, we could confidently say that our day had been an unqualified success! We should all do these trips more often.

White-throated Fantail

A list of the species seen is given below. This list also includes species seen at Dindi and en route, designated with an "N":

Sl #	Common Name	Scientific Name			Sl #	Common Name	Scientific Name	
1	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis	N		31	Blue-faced Malkoha	Phaenicophaeus viridirostris	
2	Little Cormorant	Phalacrocorax niger	N		32	Asian Koel	Eudynamys scolopacea	
3	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta	N		33	Asian Palm-swift	Cypsiurus balasiensis	
4	Great Egret	Egretta alba	N		34	Little Swift	Apus affinis	
5	Intermediate Egret	Egretta intermedia	N		35	Crested Treeswift	Hemiprocne coronata	
6	Eastern Cattle Egret	Bubulcus coromandus			36	White-breasted Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis	
7	Indian Pond-heron	Ardeola grayii	N		37	Little Green Bee-eater	Merops orientalis	
8	Asian Openbill	Anastomus oscitans	N		38	Indian Roller	Coracias benghalensis	
9	Lesser Whistling-duck	Dendrocygna javanica	N		39	Brown-headed Barbet	Megalaima zeylanica	
10	Indian Spot-billed Duck	Anas poecilorhyncha	N		40	Coppersmith Barbet	Megalaima haemacephala	
11	Garganey	Anas querquedula	N		41	Black-rumped Flameback	Dinopium benghalense	
12	Black-winged Kite	Elanus caeruleus			42	Ashy-crowned Finch-lark	Eremopterix griseus	
13	Black Kite	Milvus migrans			43	Red-rumped Swallow	Hirundo daurica	
14	Indian Shikra	Accipiter badius			44	White-browed Wagtail	Motacilla maderaspatensis	
15	Crested Hawk-Eagle	Spizaetus cirrhatus			45	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea cinerea	
16	Grey Francolin	Francolinus pondicerianus			46	Small Minivet	Pericrocotus cinnamomeus	
17	Indian Peafowl	Pavo cristatus			47	Common Woodshrike	Tephrodornis pondicerianus	
18	Red-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus indicus	N		48	Paradise Flycatcher	Terpsiphone paradisi	
19	Black-tailed Godwit	Limosa limosa	N		49	Black-naped Blue Monarch	Hypothymis azurea	
20	Common Greenshank	Tringa nebularia	N		50	White-throated Fantail	Rhipidura albicollis	
21	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola	N		51	Red-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus cafer	
22	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus	N		52	Yellow-throated Bulbul	Pycnonotus xantholaemus	
23	Rock Dove	Columba livia intermedia			53	White-browed Bulbul	Pycnonotus luteolus	
24	Laughing Dove	Streptopelia senegalensis			54	Common Iora	Aegithina tiphia	
25	Spotted Dove	Streptopelia chinensis			55	Gold-fronted Leafbird	Chloropsis aurifrons	
26	Eurasian Collared-dove	Streptopelia decaocto			56	Asian Brown Flycatcher	Muscicapa latirostris	
27	Emerald Dove	Chalcophaps indica			57	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	Cyornis tickelliae	
28	Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri			58	Blue-headed Rock-thrush	Monticola cinclorhynchus	
29	Plum-headed Parakeet	Psittacula cyanocephala			59	Blue Rock-thrush	Monticola solitarius	
30	Southern Coucal	Centropus sinensis			60	Oriental Magpie-Robin	Copsychus saularis	

Sl #	Common Name	Scientific Name			Sl #	Common Name	Scientific Name	
61	Indian Black Robin	Saxicoloides fulicatus fulicatus			75	Purple-rumped Sunbird	Leptocoma zeylonica	
62	Pied Bushchat	Saxicola caprata bicolor			76	Purple Sunbird	Cinnyris asiaticus	
63	Tawny-bellied Babbler	Dumetia hyperythra			77	Oriental White-eye	Zosterops palpebrosus	
64	Large Grey Babbler	Turdoides malcolmi			78	Indian Silverbill	Euodice malabarica	N
65	Jungle Babbler	Turdoides striata			79	Scaly-breasted Munia	Lonchura punctulata	N
66	Yellow-billed Babbler	Turdoides affinis			80	Tricoloured Munia	Lonchura malacca	
67	Ashy Prinia	Prinia socialis			81	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	
68	Jungle Prinia	Prinia sylvatica			82	Common Myna	Acridotheres tristis	
69	Plain Prinia	Prinia inornata			83	Black-hooded Oriole	Oriole xanthornus	
70	Common Tailorbird	Orthotomus sutorius			84	Black Drongo	Dicrurus macrocercus	
71	Sykes's Warbler	Hippolais rama			85	White-bellied Drongo	Dicrurus caerulescens	
72	Tickell's Leaf-warbler	Phylloscopus affinis			86	Rufous Treepie	Dendrocitta vagabunda	
73	Greenish Warbler	Phylloscopus trochiloides			87	House Crow	Corvus splendens	
74	Lesser Whitethroat	Sylvia curruca	N		88	Indian Jungle Crow	Corvus culminatus	

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Report – Annual Waterfowl Census Meeting

Ambika Pradhan

Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati

As the sun peeked out of the overcast evening sky on World Environment Day, members of the BSAP met at Vidyaranya High School, Saifabad, to celebrate and discuss the successful completion of the 50th Asian Waterfowl Census. Hot coffee and tea with some Hyderabadi biscuits and samosas started off the meet. The members interacted with one another and shared some good moments. The meeting was hosted by Amritha Lawrence who invited the Executive Committee members onto the dais. Delivering the Welcome Address, the President, Mr. Aasheesh Pittie, spoke about the importance of such activities and the role which members of the association should play, and also emphasized the importance of volunteers in a project of such a large scale as the AWC. After that our Honorable Secretary, Mr. Shafaat Ulla spoke a few words about the AWC activity and how things have changed over time. Also on the dais were Ms. Surekha and Mr. Bharadwaj who applauded the work done by the enthusiastic volunteers and stressed upon them the importance of water birds, the need to protect our wetlands, the declining population of birds and the need to conserve them.

Our AWC coordinator Mr. Humayun Taher had taken the mantle of explaining to the volunteers, the facts and figures of the current AWC activity. While there has been an increase in the number of species sighted, there has been a drastic decline in the total count. The total species sighted during AWC 2016 were close to 125 species while the total count of birds was 1.5 lakhs approximately. Adding to the above figures Mr. Taher also raised concerns about the low bird counts.

Compared to previous years there was an increase in the number of volunteers and totalled 46. Volunteers who attended the meet had come from many parts of the state, and it was wonderful to meet them after a long time. Volunteers had the opportunity to share their experiences about their travel, their sightings and all the funny moments they experienced during the AWC. There were some very interesting sightings and records of different species, one of them being the Ferruginous Duck or White-eyed Pochard which was spotted after almost 12 years.

After the volunteers shared their experiences, they were applauded and awarded certificates. They had taken out time from their busy and chaotic lives and had contributed to the bird count; this was much appreciated. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks by Srikanth B., who thanked all the EC members and volunteers. He requested the volunteers to provide support in the subsequent AWC activities and other projects which our society would host in the future. The day ended after all the volunteers posed for pictures and finally everyone dispersed.

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Trip Report – Ameenpura Lake – April 17, 2016

Text and photos: Humayun Taher

Greater Flamingo

It is instructive and very interesting to see that, though Flamingos are no longer a rarity around Hyderabad, they still have the ability to attract the public in large numbers. Birders are also prey to this attraction and so, the news of the Flamingos being present in large numbers at the Ameenpura Lake was sufficient for the BSAP members to instantly plan the April field trip to this venue. On the appointed day, therefore, I joined forces with the members at the usual rendezvous at Punjagutta X-roads, and we started off for the lake.

A small oasis in the midst of the concrete jungle that is Hyderabad, it is perhaps not really surprising that Ameenpura Lake is a very popular picnic and photography spot. Around 12 of us met up with some other members who had already arrived at the lake. The place was absolutely crawling with people, most of them in action with their long lenses, though I did spot a few who preferred the binoculars. My spotting scope, once it had been set up, became the focal point for many who had come only for a glimpse of the birds. Soon there was a line of people waiting their turn to peer through the scope, make appropriate admiring noises, and whip out their phones to take photos through the scope. Digi-scoping was being taken to a new high here!

Having picked up Shafaatsaab and the other members at the Punjagutta X-roads, we took the old familiar road and reached the place in reasonable time, though we had to wait a few minutes for one of our members. But since we utilised this opportunity to victual ourselves up with a much-needed cup of tea, this delay was not deemed to be a matter of much consequence. We were able to reach the little marsh abutting the main road more or less about the time we had anticipated.

I have to admit I did not expect this... I was totally appalled to see there was not a single drop of water here. The reeds continued fresh and green all around the edges of the erstwhile marsh, but the marsh itself had ceased to exist. A couple of Pond Herons probed hopefully in the wet mud, along with a few egrets – maybe they were managing to make a sort of living from the frogs that had probably buried themselves in the mud to keep themselves moist. At least, I hope this is so; I see no other way even these few birds would remain in the area for long, otherwise.

Since there was nothing much to see here, the group did not want to stop, although I had half a mind to investigate whether the weeds and reeds were hiding their usual numbers of Painted-snipes. Bowing to the wishes of the group, however, we continued on to the main lake. The now-famous "*Sparrow Bush*" still held its quota of Sparrows, and there were others also in the vicinity, some building their nests. We did not stop for long here, though, and finally reached the bund of the main lake, stopping at a convenient vantage point from which we could scan the entire stretch of water and see what was to be seen.

I think all of us were somewhat surprised to see the shrinkage of this lake also. The waters had shrunk to maybe 25 or 30 percent of the normal spread. The flamingos were there, sure enough – a flock of about 100 birds spread out close to the shores on the far side of the lake. But even more amazing was the human activity – there were some 30 to 40 cars parked all along the lake edge on the far side, and a veritable sea of humanity was to be descried on the shores. Little knots of people stood here and there, peering through their lenses at the birds. Fortunately, though, the birds seemed to have learnt to take it in their stride. I suppose really they have nowhere else to go, so they are just doing the best that they can.

Little Ringed Plover

Driving down to the other side, we shouldered our paraphernalia and made our way down to the shores of the lake to see what else was around. A Kentish Plover was doing a broken-wing display right in front of us. Respecting the intention behind this action, we took a slight detour and approached the lake shore. The water here could not have been more than six inches deep. Notwithstanding, there were considerable numbers of birds to be seen. I am sure this is because the birds now have no alternative, as the drought has dried up most of the smaller, shallower lakes in the region. Maybe that's why we saw so many migrants, in addition to the resident population.

Black-tailed Godwit

A flock of some 70 Black-tailed Godwits, many of them in full breeding plumage, were even more interesting than the Greater Flamingos dotted all around the lake in small groups. It was instructive to see about 40 of the birds, still in juvenile plumage, clearly demonstrate the nursery-habits of the birds – the entire group of young birds kept together, with three adults patrolling the perimeter, as it were, to prevent any of them straying. Interspersed with the flamingos was a small group of about 10 Spot-billed Pelicans. A quartet of Ruddy Shelduck, and about 45 Garganey, were the only migrant ducks, although the residents were well-represented by Lesser Whistling-ducks, Spot-billed Ducks and Comb Ducks. Some of the migrant waders were also still around – a decent pod of Little Stints, Common and Wood Sandpipers, Common Greenshanks, and the Black-tailed Godwits earlier mentioned. As to the few Godwits still in non-breeding plumage, we hazarded a guess that these may be juveniles not yet ready to breed. A very plausible suggestion, it adds another interesting point to the observations on these birds. Truly, birding can become even more enjoyable if we take some time to observe carefully.

My old friends, the Black-winged Stilts were also around in good numbers. Scanning the flocks for the black-necked individual often seen on this lake, I was happy to see not one but some 5-6 specimens of the dark-head-and-neck variety. These colour aberrations are common in this species and it would be interesting if someone could throw some light on the phenomenon.

Black-winged Stilt

Ashy-crowned Sparrowlark

Madhuri and Jayati, who had gone a bit further, found a male Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark carrying a caterpillar in its beak and, carefully observing where it went, were able to see it feeding its young. The nest still had two unhatched eggs, and one chick, so it seems possible that the chick was only hatched that day or a day earlier. Bearing in mind that crows and herons would think nothing of robbing the nest, we did not approach any closer. River and Little Terns were basking on the sandbanks, and these bold birds are also known to sometimes take chicks, so it behooved us to show caution in these matters.

Yellow Wagtail

But by far the most interesting sightings on the shores of this lake were the wagtails! We saw several birds; Shafaatsaab told us that he had come to this place a few days earlier and had been rewarded by a sighting of close to a thousand wagtails coming in to roost! This sounds suspiciously like the large flocks we had seen roosting in the reeds at this place in 2012, and it is gratifying to learn that the birds are coming back. There was a time in 2013, when the wagtails appeared to have deserted this roost, and we had been much exercised as to where they may have gone. So, if these were indeed the same birds returning to their traditional roost, it looks very much as though the lake is once again starting to come into its own! I was curious enough to count the number of wagtails I saw on this trip, and I came up with a count of 72, consisting of the Citrine, Blue-headed Yellow and White-browed persuasions.

Birding with the group is never complete until we have shared breakfast. The sun was climbing higher now, and the day was getting a little uncomfortable. So we repaired back to the cars, and soon a most welcome repast spread itself out on the hood. Shafaatsaab's now-famous egg sandwiches were an instant hit, but there were some other equally interesting gastronomic triumphs. Refreshed and, perhaps, just a little bloated with this feast, we discussed plans, being interrupted by Col. Cheema's sighting of a pair of Small Pratincoles, and the most marvellous overhead flight of a squadron of 17 Eurasian Spoonbills.

The Spoonbills are also now becoming regulars at this little lake and I sincerely hope this trend continues. The only concern seems to be that fishing activities are still continuing unabated here. How many fishing birds such as Cormorants and Darters may be getting entangled in the fishing nets, we don't know. But I scarcely think we should be complaining about this because, after all, it is only because of the huge population of fish at this lake that the birds are here in such good numbers.

Stopping the traditional fishing activities here may be counter-productive in more ways than one. Firstly there will be a lot less fish for the birds to feed on and, secondly the local fishermen may start to drive away the birds so that they can get their fishing area back. I would actually like to see this place turned into a community reserve, and some strong and innovative plans drawn up that would benefit the birds, the fishermen and the local people – that way, all parties would be happy and would have an interest in the protection and preservation of this place.

With the day now heated up to an extent where pleasurable birding was no longer possible, and with some 79 species already recorded, it was time to bring this trip to a close. So, not without some regret, we started back, feeling that the morning had been most worth-while. If a large number of the group had been entertained by the sighting of the graceful Greater Flamingos, there were others who had equally enjoyed the spectacle of the colourful Black-tailed Godwits. St. Patrick had given of his best, and we were none of us complaining as we wended our way homewards.

Singing Bushlark

A full list of the birds seen on this trip is given below:

Sl #	Common Name	Scientific Name		Sl #	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Lesser Whistling-Duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*		40	Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*
2	Comb Duck (Knob-billed Duck)	*Sarkidiornis melanotos*		41	Small Pratincole	*Glareola lactea*
3	Ruddy Shelduck (Brahminy Duck)	*Tadorna ferruginea*		42	Little Tern	*Sternula albifrons*
4	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*		43	Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybrida*
5	Garganey	*Anas querquedula*		44	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*
6	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*		45	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*
7	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*		46	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*
8	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*		47	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*
9	Greater Flamingo	*Phoenicopterus roseus*		48	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*
10	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*		49	Asian Palm-Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*
11	Indian Cormorant (Indian Shag)	*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*		50	Eurasian Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*
12	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*		51	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*
13	Little Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax niger*		52	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
14	Oriental Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*		53	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*
15	Spot-billed Pelican	*Pelecanus philippensis*		54	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
16	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*		55	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*
17	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*		56	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*
18	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*		57	Bay-backed Shrike	*Lanius vittatus*
19	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*		58	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
20	Eastern/Western Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*		59	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*
21	Indian PondHeron	*Ardeola grayii*		60	Singing Bushlark	*Mirafra cantillans*
22	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*		61	Ashy-crowned Sparrowlark	*Eremopterix griseus*
23	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*		62	Dusky Crag Martin	*Ptyonoprogne concolor*
24	Red-naped Ibis (Indian Black Ibis)	*Pseudibis papillosa*		63	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*
25	Eurasian Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*		64	Red-rumped Swallow	*Cecropis daurica*
26	Eurasian MarshHarrier	*Circus aeruginosus*		65	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
27	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*		66	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
28	Brahminy Kite	*Haliastur indus*		67	Large Grey Babbler	*Turdoides malcolmi*
29	Grey-headed Swamphen (Purple Swamphen)	*Porphyrio poliocephalus*		68	Indian Robin	*Copsychus fulicatus*
30	Indian Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*		69	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*
31	Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*		70	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
32	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*		71	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Leptocoma zeylonica*
33	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*		72	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
34	Kentish Plover	*Charadrius alexandrinus*		73	Western Yellow Wagtail (Blue-headed)	*Motacilla flava flava/beema*
35	Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*		74	Citrine Wagtail	*Motacilla citreola*
36	Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*		75	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*
37	Common Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*		76	Paddyfield Pipit	*Anthus rufulus*
38	Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*		77	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
39	Black-tailed Godwit	*Limosa limosa*		78	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*

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Bird of the Month

Text and photo: Umesh Mani

Brown Hawk-owl (*Ninox scutulata*)

Brown Hawk-owl (Chennai, 21-03-2015)

Order: Strigiformes
Family: Strigidae
Genus: *Ninox*
Species: *N.scutulata*
Size: 32 cm

Description & distribution: Also known as the Brown Boobook, the Brown Hawk-owl is a resident breeding owl across most of its range, which extends across most parts of tropical South Asia from the Middle East to India, Sri Lanka, western Indonesia and South China.

It is a medium-sized member of the Strigidae family, which is a group of 'typical' owls (as opposed to the other group, 'barn' owls). Its long, barred tail and lack of clear facial disk gives it a hawk-like appearance, hence the name. The eyes are large and yellow, upperparts are brown, and underparts are whitish with reddish-brown streaking. The Andaman sub-species, however, has dark brown underparts.

Habitat & behaviour: The Brown Hawk-owl is usually found in well-wooded country and forests. It is nocturnal; during the day it tends to stay put at its roost, allowing fairly close approaches without flying away. At roost, it can sometimes be located by the small birds that tend to mob it. Its diet consists mainly of frogs, lizards, mice, large insects and small birds. The call, a repetitive, soft, musical *oo-uk oo-uk*, can usually be heard at dawn and dusk. It is quite common in cities and suburbs, close to buildings.

Nesting: The Brown Hawk-owl breeds from May to July. It nests in tree holes, and lays a brood of about 3 to 5 eggs.

Local name: The Brown Hawk Owl is known as *'chughad basra'* in Hindi, *'pagadigante vestam'* in Telugu, and *'chinna aandai'* in Tamil.

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